

Corporate Services – Priority Based Monitoring Report Q1

Reporting Period: 1st April – 30th June 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the first quarter of 2024/25 for service areas within the remit of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board.
- 1.2 It covers key priorities for development or improvement in the various functional areas reporting to the Board in relation to the Council's priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency i.e.:
- Financial Services
 - Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
 - ICT Infrastructure
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
 - Property Services
- 1.3 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 5 of this report.

1.4 Corporate Priorities



Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029
Our Community, Our Priorities, Our Future

Plan on a Page



2.0 High Priority Equality Actions

- 2.1 Equality issues continue to form a routine element of the Council’s business planning and operational decision making processes. Additionally the Council must have evidence to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which came into force in April 2011.
- 2.2 The Councils latest annual progress report in relation to the achievement of its equality objectives is published on the Council website and is available via:

<http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Equality-and-Diversity.aspx>

3.0 Performance Overview

- 3.1 Key Performance Indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate.
- 3.2 It should be noted that given the significant and unrelenting downward financial pressures faced by the Council there is a requirement for Departments to make continuous in-year adjustments to the allocation of resources in order to ensure that the Council maintains a balanced budget.
- 3.3 Whilst every effort continues to be made to minimise any negative impact of such arrangements upon service delivery they may inevitably result in a delay in the delivery of some of the objectives and targets contained within this report.


Financial Management

Key Objectives / milestones


Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS01	Higher proportion of council tax income due for the year to be collected compared to the previous year

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the in-year collection rate will be compared to the same point of the previous year	U	Collection rate to 30 June 2024 was 27.33% which is marginally lower than the rate of 27.41% at the same point last year. It is uncertain at this point if collection for the year will be at the same level as for 2023/24. To 30 June 2024 £797,106 was collected in relation to old year debt.


Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS02	Higher proportion of business rates income due for the year to be collected compared to previous year

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the in-year collection rate will be compared to the same point of the previous year		Collection rate to 30 June 2024 was 32.57% which is 0.81% higher than the rate of 31.76% at the same point last year. It is uncertain at this point if collection for the year will be at the same level as for 2023/24. To 30 June 2024 £778,454 was collected in relation to old year debt.

Corporate Priority	Priority 4 - Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
FS 03	Reducing the average time for processing new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims by 1 day, compared to the previous year, to an average of 21.65 days.


Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target Q1 20.83 days		On target.

Corporate Priority	Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
FS 04	Reducing the average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction by 1 day, compared to the previous year, to an average of 8.55 days.


Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target Q1 13.70 days		The managed migration (commenced 2024/25) of housing benefit claimants to Universal Credit is causing significantly more notifications from the Department

		for Works and Pensions, reporting changes to Council Tax Reduction claimants' Universal Credit/income. The impact of this change has resulted in significantly more changes in circumstances to be processed, which is affecting processing times.
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Corporate Priority	Priority Two - Building a strong, sustainable, local economy
FS 05	Ensuring 90% of all suppliers' invoices are paid within 30 days, including those which are disputed invoices.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the proportion of suppliers' invoices paid within 30 days will be assessed Q1 92.28%		On target



Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS 06	Higher proportion of historic sundry debt to be collected compared to the same point the previous year

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the collection rate for the total outstanding historic debt (balance as at the previous year-end) will be compared to the same point the previous year		Total outstanding historic debt stood at £17,460,981 as at 31 March 2024. By 30 June 2024, 38.38% of this debt had been collected. The collection rate for historic debt was 37.85% at the same point last year.


Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 01	Reduction in Sickness absence across the Council - Review and amend policy to focus on attendance, train and empower managers to apply procedure timely.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
23/24 – 11.46 – data showing on		Data is actually 15.5 without schools not 11.46
24/25 -12.5 FTE days average lost		Q1 - 2.65
25/26 - 10 FTE days average per person (public sector average)	*	. N/A
26/27 –7.8 FTE days average lost (national average)	*	N/A

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 02	Promote increased stability of the workforce across the organisation - Improve the Employer value proposition of HBC to Attract and retain talent and become and Employer of choice.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Improve the Employer value proposition of HBC to Attract and retain talent and become and Employer of choice. 24/25 – turnover 13% stability 88%		Turnover: 15.29% Workforce Stability: 87.12% Slightly down on target for Q1,

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 03	Reduce flexible workforce (agency) spend and deployment across the organisation

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
24/25 – 11m	U	£3,397,163.09
25/26 – 10m	*	N/A
26/27 – 9m – not noted in delivery plan	*	N/A

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 04	To increase the number of post filled 1st time To reduce the proportion of vacancies required advertisement


Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
To reduce the proportion of vacancies required advertisement 23/24 – 78% -current 24/25 – 13.5% 25/26 – 12% 26/27 – 10.%		23/24 – 78% -current Quarter 1 14 %
To increase the number of post filled 1st time 23/24 – 78% -current 24/25 – 80% 25/26 – 83% 26/27 – 88%		23/24 – 78% -current Current 90 %

Strategic Outcomes


STRATEGIC ISSUES	BASELINE POSITION	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 1	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 3	INTERVENTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Reduction in Sickness absence across the Council	15.26 days average per person	12.5 FTE days average lost	26/27 –7.8 FTE days average lost (national average)		
Promote increased stability of the workforce across the organisation	23/24 – turnover 14.9% stability 87.3%	24/25 – turnover 13% stability 88%	26/27 – turnover 10% stability 90%		
Reduce flexible workforce (agency) spend and deployment across the organisation	23/24 14m	24/25 – 11m	26/27 – 9m		
To increase the number of post filled 1st time To reduce the proportion of vacancies required advertisement	To increase the number of post filled 1st time 23/24 – 78% To reduce the proportion of vacancies required advertisement 23/24 – 15%	24/25 – 80% 24/25 – 13.5%			

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
ICT 01	LD1 Average availability of the Council's M365 Systems 24/7 - 365.


Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
2023 saw the delivery of the initial Microsoft M365 E5 platform – 2024 continues to deliver updates with key technical partners.		The delivery of M365 has been a colossal undertaking, delivering a step change in the way the authority delivers technology to the end user. This undertaking has also crossed over the Customer Journey Transformation project delivering positive change to the end user experience linked to this change over to the Microsoft cloud. The project carries a number of dependencies to complete certain phases of the delivery. The switch from Microsoft Skype to a full Teams telephony implementation again is linked to the Customer Journey Transformation programme of work, one aspect is the delivery of a new contact centre solution – the current solution operates using the old technologies associated with Skype and is the final piece in the jigsaw for the full removal of this old system that has served the authority for the last 15 years. As detailed within ICT03 a project is in place to complete this process. Once this aspect of the M365 programme is complete the programme will start to focus upon the user experience as the new Laptop rollout will be able to complete removing the last 440 users from the VMware Desktop environment with the objective for completion of both projects 3 rd early 4 th quarter 2024/25.

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
ICT 02	LD2 Security Incidents across each reporting quarter

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
The software packages and monitoring solutions will be in place by the 3 rd quarter 2024. Work is underway with Emergency planning in terms of communicating the implication of loss and the need for business based resilience plans.		<p>Across the previous Q4 and Q1 of this year extensive analysis and negotiations took place across a number of suppliers of what is known as MDR – Managed Detection Response, this in base terms covers the Cyber Security stance for the authority. This is essentially a remote 24/7 x 365 managed solution that covers Cyber:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat Detection • Threat Hunting • Response and Remediation • Incident response • Data Location Monitoring • Service Level Management • Managed Risk Services • Security Awareness training • PEN Testing and attack simulation management <p>Within HBC our technology assets and our data assets live in an ever changing world where the opportunity for criminal activity is increasing on a daily basis. In reality at a rate that is starting to become a major threat to the operation and sustainability of not just the authority. We are now at the mercy of many attack vectors from individuals and criminal gangs through to foreign government backed agencies. This is a world-wide issue that is hitting our news feeds and TV screens constantly with prominent attacks across a number of London hospitals recently causing millions of pounds worth of issues and disruption as business's are not able to operate without access to technology anymore.</p>


		<p>Many of our employees born in the early 90's may have never experienced a workplace without technology.</p> <p>As an organisation we closely follow NCSC and DHLUC cyber security frameworks and guidelines together with being an early adopter of the Government led Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF). It must be noted that purchasing this contract is not a magic pill and that we would never be subject to any attack but this will considerably mitigate the potential for attack and improve our security stance. A contract was awarded within Q2 covering a five year fixed fee contractual period. Work is now underway to implement the solution with the new provider over Q2.</p>
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Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
ICT 03	LD3 Number of resolved customer contacts – Contact Centre

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the delivered process and the number of contacts will be reported with an objective of delivering contact through all digital means, reducing wait times and improving resolution at 1 st contact for those services that will allow.		<p>27'945 individual call contacts across Quarter 1</p> <p>As noted within ICT01 a project has been underway to remove the ageing Contact Centre System with a modern highly functional cloud based telephony solution that has the ability to connect to a cloud based CRM solution as well as the authorities in house platform for CRM.</p> <p>Again this is a considerable undertaking as the call volumes into the authority are high and the delivery of the data platform supporting such a high volume solution has to be developed.</p>

		<p>The current CRM solution holds in excess of 20 years' worth of customer data this is again linked to over 1'100 individual service delivery options. Both the Telephony solution and the CRM have to evolve to enable new ways of working that will include Ai driven IVR queueing, Chat Bots and many other innovative solutions we now come to expect when we use the Web, Call Centre and Self Help solutions open to us in this technology driven environment. We cannot forget all of these services run on extensive and complex data sets many of which have been built over many years servicing the needs of often complex client requirements. The Changes to the Telephony and CRM systems are one of the most prominent features of the authorities interaction with the vast majority of our clients. As such the need to get this right first time is essential. Quarter 2 will bring with it set of completed contracts for both CRM and Telephony with a delivery objective within Quarter 3 of approximately 12 weeks.</p>
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Corporate Priority	Priority 4 - Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
ICT 04	LD4 Number of resolved contacts – One Stop Shop's

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
<p>The partnerships within the shop's continue to increase at a pace and a programme of work linked to the Transformation programme owned by the department. This is currently under development to increase the levels of services available and looking to partner with key external agencies.</p>		<p>20'021 individual face to face interactions across Quarter 1.</p> <p>The Customer Journey transformation strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to enhancing the full customer journey using personalised web portals, chatbots, mobile technologies, social media integration, and the latest AI and chat technologies. The</p>

goal is to seamlessly link the authority's contact centre and shop's with these technologies. Improving both face-to-face and digital customer experiences while ensuring accessibility for all, including those with limited access to technology. This strategy will also integrate with existing CRM and Office 365 technologies to improve internal and external client interactions from contact to resolution.

Enhance Face-to-Face Customer Experience objectives Q1 – Q4:

Features

- Digital Check-In: Customers can check in for appointments or services via kiosks or mobile apps.
- Integrated Systems: Use AI to enhance face-to-face interactions by providing staff with customer insights.
- Feedback Systems: Digital kiosks or mobile apps for real-time feedback during face-to-face interactions.

Integration

- CRM Integration: Update customer records with face-to-face interaction details.
- Office 365 Integration: Enable staff to access relevant documents and collaboration tools during interactions.

Benefits

- Personalised Service: Staff can provide more personalised assistance.
- Real-Time Feedback: Immediate understanding of customer satisfaction and areas for improvement.


This will also be linked to potential partnerships with NHS led Halton Health Hubs
Discussions are in place to evaluate the options and also to offer an NHS presence within the HBC locations.

		Management are discussing options to increase the number of council services within the locations bringing services into the community on a face to face basis. Not all interaction can be digital.
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Legal & Democracy

Key Objectives / milestones


Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 01	To ensure that decision makers are supported through the provision of timely and accurate advice and information and are kept informed of changing legislation and responsibilities

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Revised Constitution to be approved by Annual Council each May		The revised Constitution was approved by Council in May


Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 02	To provide efficient and effective Democratic Support Services that provides Elected Members, as key decision makers, with the necessary information, support and training opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and management and governance role effectively

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Inductions to be completed by June following election and offer of MAPs to be monitored on a quarterly basis		All inductions were completed by the end of May and MAP meetings have been offered to all members.

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 03	Ensure that prosecutions are carried out expeditiously by monitoring average time taken to issue from receipt of full instructions. The target is within 10 working days.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target		The target has been met.




Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 04	Ensure that care cases are carried out expeditiously by monitoring average time taken to file application for Care proceedings at Court from receipt of all written evidence from client department. The target is within 3 working days

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target		The target has been met.




Catering & Registration Services

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need. Registrars
ERD 34	Provide accessible and efficient Registration Service to Halton residents.

Milestone: Quarterly updates on progress and annual performance data statistics to be reported to the relevant PPB	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Births (or declarations) within 5 working days of request		Halton has achieved 100%, the national average is 95%
Deaths (or declarations) within 2 working days of request		Halton 98.67%, the national standard is 95%
Waiting times - % of customers seen early, on time or within 10 minutes of their appointment time.		98.09% versus 90% Average. The service has full staff resource and are also multi trained in register duties which enables Halton's high achievement with this indicator.





Strategic Outcomes

Appointment Type	Total Number	Number outside of timeframe	Halton %	Progress Q1	Comments
Births (or declarations) within 5 working days of request	6	0	100%		100% within requested time National average 95%
Deaths (or declarations) within 2 working days of request	150	2	98.67%		Contact from Informant on Friday / Bank Holiday National average 95%
Waiting Times – % of customers seen early, on time or within 10 minutes of their appointment time	314	6	98.09%		The service has full staffing resource and are also multi-trained in registrar duties which enables Halton's high achievement with this indicator National average 95%




Property Services

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	<p>Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence.</p> <p>Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families.</p> <p>Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future.</p> <p>Property Services</p>
ERD 11	Rationalise the Council’s main office accommodation to deliver revenue savings.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Exec Board approval to vacate the Municipal Building and progress with associated works – June 24.		Informal report presented prior to Exec Board in June but no decisions made regarding vacating the Municipal Building. Exec Board requested further information be presented on the various options. Target date to report back to the September meeting.
Agreement to revised officer to desk ratio – September 24		The revised officer to desk ratio of 2 to 1 was discussed with Exec Board Members in June, no decision was made, further information will be presented in quarter 2.
Complete options appraisal for Widnes office to present to members by March 25		Proposals on various options to be presented to Executive Board Members, in quarter 2.
Agreed approach to provision of HBC staff accommodation by March 25		Subject to the above, it is hoped that a decision will be made by March 2025 with regards the accommodation for HBC staff.

Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future. Property Services
ERD 12	Reduce Carbon Emissions from the Council’s Property Portfolio

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Deliver the leisure centre by Feb 3 rd , 2025.		The Leisure Centre is currently on programme for delivery by the contractual completion date of the 3rd of February 2025.
Commence works on site at St Pat’s & St Luke’s by December 2024.		Eric Wright Partnerships are currently updating the design information and will be providing updated estimated costs in due course. The intension is that a report will be presented to Exec Board in September outlining the most appropriate way to proceed. A procurement process will then be undertaken to allow a contractor to be appointed, therefore it may be into the new year before a start on site occurs, subject to budget approval.
Ensure year on year reduction in carbon emissions from the Council’s property portfolio. Baseline at 31 st March 2023 - 6096 tonnes. target 3% after year 1, 5% reduction after year 3.		Carbon emissions for the year 2023-24 from the Council’s buildings (Corporate buildings & schools) have amounted to 5593 tonnes carbon which equates to just over an 8% reduction from the previous year.

4.0 Financial Statements

*Note all financial projections contained within this report are based on actual through to 31 July rather than the usual 30 June for the Q1 position.

Finance Department

Revenue Budget as at 31 July 2024

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,945	2,315	2,197	118	100
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	22	(22)	(124)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	0	0	0
Insurances	986	295	296	(1)	(5)
Supplies & Services	410	253	291	(38)	(117)
Rent Allowances	35,500	10,622	10,622	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	0	2	(2)	(127)
LCR Levy	1,748	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	(145)
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	23	17	6	(1)
Discretionary Social Fund	106	35	0	35	90
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	100	70	30	94
Household Support Fund Expenditure	2,480	763	763	0	0
Total Expenditure	50,370	14,406	14,280	126	(235)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-335	-87	-96	9	28
Burdens Grant	-60	-60	-78	18	18
Dedicated schools Grant	-144	-4	0	(4)	(13)
Council Tax Liability Order	-581	-341	-366	25	76
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-312	-312	-307	(5)	(7)
LCR Reimbursement	-1,748	0	0	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-153	-157	4	14
Rent Allowances	-34,700	-8,726	-8,685	(41)	(123)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-23	-25	2	1
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-100	-93	(7)	(21)
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-498	-166	-163	(3)	(9)
Housing Benefits Award Accuracy	0	0	-12	12	12
Universal Credits	-5	-2	0	(2)	(5)
Household Support Fund Grant	-2,480	-729	-729	0	0
VEP Grant	0	0	-5	5	5
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-87	-79	-85	6	(20)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-151	-28	-47	19	53
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	0	0	7
Total Income	-42,028	-10,810	-10,848	38	16
Net Operational Expenditure	8,342	3,596	3,432	164	(219)
Recharges					
Premises Support	377	126	126	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,365	788	788	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-6,053	-2,018	-2,018	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,311	-1,104	-1,104	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	5,031	2,492	2,328	164	(219)

Comments on the above figures

The forecast outturn for the year as at 31 July 2024 is for the department net spend position to be £0.219m over the approved budget.



In previous years there has been a notable underspend against the Concessionary Travel budget, however this is forecasted to end as operations begin to revert back to usual procedures following several years of Covid adjusted reimbursements to the operators. New rates have been calculated by the bus operators following the termination of the Covid support, and the updated expenditure forecast reflects this. An overspend of £0.127m above the approved budget profile is forecast by the end of the financial year.

Despite an increase in budget in 2024/25 Rent Allowances continue to be an area of concern, due to the increased costs of supported accommodation, the expenditure budget is higher than the income budget. This should ideally net to zero, however, Housing Benefit will only fund supported accommodation up to a nominal figure after which, 60% will come from housing benefits and the remaining 40% is up to the Council to fund. The outturn figure has reduced from prior years due to the increased budget uplift, however it is still forecasted to have a significant impact on the department's overall outturn.

Within Supplies and Services, there is a £0.127m overspend, £0.45m is due to the business rates team engaging with Inform CPI who specialise in identifying new business rate premises that have not been included within the rating list. Whilst there is no budget for this expenditure, the exercise has generated £0.240m in additional business rates income which should sit against the Collection Fund account next year.

Approved 2024/25 Savings

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
F9	Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	0	50		No official changes made yet
F13	Discretionary Support Scheme	221	Review the roles, procedures and structure of the team.	25	0		On track

F17	Council Tax	84	Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.	40	40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On track
Total Finance Department				65	90		

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit

Revenue Budget as at 31 July 2024

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	3,283	1,094	1,061	33	110
Employees Training	117	53	40	13	39
Apprenticeship Levy	300	68	105	(37)	(113)
Supplies & Services	395	67	77	(10)	(30)
Total Expenditure	4,095	1,282	1,283	-1	6
Income					
Fees & Charges	-223	-29	-35	6	17
Schools SLA Income	-565	-517	-509	(8)	(22)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-5	5	5
Total Income	-788	-546	-549	3	0
Net Operational Expenditure	3,307	736	734	2	6
Recharges					
Premises Support	174	58	58	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,209	403	403	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,573	-1,191	-1,191	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,137	-730	-730	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,170	6	4	2	6

Comments on the above figures

Currently the Chief Executive Delivery Unit Department (CXDU) is projecting an outturn position under the approved budget profile by £0.006m. The largest contributing factor to the underspend is in relation to employee expenditure, the service contains a number of vacancies.

The underspend generated by the vacancies is expected to be offset by an overspend against the approved budget profile in relation to the apprenticeship levy.

The Apprenticeship Levy is a small tax levied to fund new apprenticeships. It means that all UK businesses with an annual wage bill of more than £3m must pay ½ a per cent of their gross payroll to HMRC. As wages have increased and will continue to do so, the amount paid to HMRC will also increase and will remain a budget pressure going forwards.

ICT and Administration Department

Revenue Budget as at 31 July 2024

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,596	1,922	1,817	105	318
Supplies & Services	921	464	610	(146)	(437)
Capital Finance	100	33	4	29	62
Computer Repairs & Software	1,724	1,576	1,674	(98)	(268)
Communication Costs	13	0	41	(41)	(142)
Premises	159	61	59	2	7
Transport	3	1	0	1	1
Total Expenditure	8,516	4,057	4,205	-148	-459
Income					
Fees & Charges	-1,056	-489	-489	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-646	-502	-483	(19)	(59)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	0	-13	-20	7	(19)
Transfer from Reserves	-148	-148	-148	0	448
Total Income	-1,850	-1,152	-1,140	(12)	370
Net Operational Expenditure	6,666	2,905	3,065	(160)	(89)
Recharges					
Premises Support	550	183	183	0	0
Transport Support	19	6	7	(1)	0
Central Support	2,380	793	793	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
Support Costs Income	-8,831	-2,944	-2,944	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,388	-1,962	-1,961	(1)	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,278	943	1,104	(161)	(89)

Comments on the above figures

At the end of the 2024/25 financial year it is forecasted that the ICT and Administration Department will be over the approved budget profile by £0.089m.

In previous years, a significant budget pressure for the department has been the administrative staff. Now that the service has been disaggregated the burden is no longer pooled within the department but across the Council.

The main pressures faced by the ICT and Administration Department is now in relation to the IT infrastructure, with the move to Microsoft 365, staff have been able to utilise much more efficient hardware. However, the software utilised by the new hardware is at a premium and will be a continuous pressure the Council will need to react to as prices fluctuate.

With a number of agency staff across the Council, ICT and Administrative Services are recharging licence costs for non HBC staff to their respective departments as the costs are not held within the initial contracts with suppliers such as Microsoft, this should help budget holders more readily see the impact their agency staff are having on the Council's finances as there is not just the direct fees to be considered, there is strain on a number of other services and existing contracts which do come at additional costs.

There has been a substantial increase in postage costs, impacting the communications budget, which is forecast to overspend against the annual budget by £0.142m.

SLA income will be reduced as schools are withdrawing from Halton BC and using a different provider

Legal and Democratic Services Department

Revenue Budget as at 31 July 2024

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,511	683	674	9	28
Agency Related Expenditure	0	0	353	(353)	(632)
Supplies & Services	368	155	261	(106)	(4)
Civic Catering & Functions	23	8	2	6	12
Legal Expenses	218	19	19	0	(278)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	4	0	4	7
Other Expenditure	0	0	3	(3)	(3)
Total Expenditure	2,131	869	1,312	(443)	(870)
Income					
Land Charges	0	0	-29	29	85
School SLA's	-98	-84	-77	(7)	(20)
Licence Income	-301	-100	-79	(21)	(46)
Government Grant	-42	-42	-42	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grants	-171	-171	-171	0	0
Fees & Charges Income	-74	-29	-14	(15)	(34)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-27	27	27
Total Income	-686	-426	-439	13	12
Net Operational Expenditure	1,445	443	873	(430)	(858)
Recharges					
Premises Support	53	18	18	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	275	92	92	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-2,391	-797	-797	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,063	-687	-687	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-618	-244	186	(430)	(858)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of July 2024 the department is reporting a net overspend against budget. It is currently forecast that net spend for the department will be over the approved budget by approximately £0.858m at the end of the financial year.

Employee costs for the year are expected to marginally be below the approved budget (including staff payments for recent elections). This is a result of the number of vacancies that exist within the department but due to the demand on the service, agency staff are required to maintain the service. The main area of concern for the department is the volume of agency costs resulting from hard to fill vacant posts. It is expected these costs will be in the region of £0.632m at the end of the financial year. Although these are agreed to be funded from reserves, due to the Council's current level of reserve balances it is increasingly important to develop alternative options to maintain the service levels.

Within the forecast £0.278m overspend against budget of legal expenses, there is an estimated £0.470m costs relating to the contracting of barristers, most of which again, are due to the limited number of staff available to clear an increasing caseload. The impact of the transformation and recovery work in Children Services, as well as alternatives to agency staff such as market supplements, should help drive down the overspend in the department

Approved 2024/25 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Environment & Regeneration
Revenue Budget as at 31st July 2024

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,358	3,700	3,457	243	1,146
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	66	(66)	(262)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	50	(50)	(101)
Premises	3,521	1,070	1,089	(19)	(71)
Supplies & Services	1,585	380	401	(21)	(80)
Hired & Contracted Services	510	83	83	0	0
Book Fund	128	53	53	0	0
Food Provision	388	115	108	7	36
School Meals Food	2,083	320	332	(12)	(42)
Transport	117	10	11	(1)	(9)
Agency Costs	441	100	148	(48)	(94)
Other Expenditure	0	0	41	(41)	(50)
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,002	0	0	0	255
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	64	16	12	4	35
Grant to Norton Priory	172	29	87	(58)	0
Total Expenditure	33,369	5,876	5,938	(62)	763
Income					
Sales Income	-1,373	-422	-422	0	(118)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,470	-1,952	-1,942	(10)	(50)
Rental Income	-235	-39	-71	32	26
Markets Income	-910	-152	-208	56	(79)
Government Grant Income	-643	-482	-482	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-703	-467	-467	0	0
School SLA Income	-1,313	-219	-250	31	(10)
School Meals Income	-3,598	-600	-562	(38)	(213)
Internal Fees Income	-286	-48	-15	(33)	61
Capital Salaries	-173	-29	-14	(15)	(5)
Transfers from Reserves	-14	-14	-14	0	0
Total Income	-14,718	-4,424	-4,447	23	(388)
Net Operational Expenditure	18,651	1,452	1,491	(39)	375
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,675	279	279	0	0
Transport	2,257	376	214	162	(51)
Central Support	3,592	599	599	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	33	33	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-843	-141	-141	0	0
Net Total Recharges	6,880	1,146	984	162	(51)
Net Departmental Expenditure	25,531	2,598	2,475	123	324

Comments on the above figures

The net Departmental Expenditure is forecast to be £0.324m under budget at the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

Spend on employees is forecasted to be £1.146m under the annual budget. A restructure is taking place within the Community Safety, Leisure and within the Stadium and Catering Division, in order to facilitate these restructures, posts have been held vacant on a temporary basis, leading to a reduction in costs.

There have also been difficulties recruiting to certain roles due to a lack of qualified applicants, which has led to some posts being vacant for longer than planned. The figure is offset from an expected agency spend of £0.363m.

Spend on premises costs is forecast to be £0.071m over the approved budget in 2024/25, the new leisure centre is now expected to hand over within this financial year and will begin to incur costs within 24/25. The original plans were for the leisure centre to utilise the solar farm however the extension required to provide energy to the leisure centre has only recently been submitted for planning, so there is a potential budget pressure next year as the energy will have to be provided elsewhere until the solar farm extension is functioning.

Supplies and Services is showing a forecast overspend of £0.080m which is a budget pressure throughout the Department and is primarily caused by inflationary cost increases of key goods and services over recent years

Waste Disposal Contract costs are forecasted to achieve £0.255m under the approved budget during 2024/25. Costs are likely to increase slightly from 2023/24, however invoices are not received until later in the financial year so it is difficult to fully indicate what the outturn position will be at this stage.

Sales, Fees & Charges, and Markets Income are expected to be below the income target within 2024/25, these are offset against reductions in forecasted expenditure for the year in particular the staffing costs, as the staff are not in place to generate the income, however the full impact of changes of this nature will be realised following the cessation of the School Meals service as this budget pressure absorbs any underspend generated.

Budget Savings

Catering Stadium & Registration Services

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	36	0		✓ Restructure is currently underway
COMM5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	0	12		✓ The cessation of the service is underway with the majority of schools ending their contracts by the end of the calendar year.
Total Community & Environment Department				36	12		

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Revenue Operational Budget at 31 July 2024

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	4,342	1,812	1,709	103	308
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	102	(102)	(305)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	0	0	0
Repairs & Maintenance	1,689	700	741	(41)	(117)
Premises	146	119	119	0	0
Energy & Water Costs	1,221	281	267	14	62
NNDR	659	633	623	10	10
Rents	163	0	0	0	0
Economic Regeneration Activities	21	0	0	0	0
Security	544	173	172	1	4
Supplies & Services	482	119	106	13	40
Supplies & Services - Grant	1,074	169	169	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	67	44	44	0	0
Capital Finance	0		0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	165	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	10,573	4,050	4,052	(2)	2
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-721	-346	-361	15	46
Rent - Commercial Properties	-871	-196	-196	0	0
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-14	-14	0	0
Government Grant	-1,531	-753	-753	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-306	-172	-170	(2)	(6)
Schools SLA Income	-234	-209	-192	(17)	(17)
Recharges to Capital	-348	-163	-163	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-393	-384	-384	0	0
Total Income	-4,442	-2,237	-2,233	(4)	23
Net Operational Expenditure	6,131	1,813	1,819	(6)	25
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,074	691	691	0	0
Transport	30	10	10	0	0
Central Support	1,947	649	649	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-7,927	-2,642	-2,642	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,872	-1,292	-1,292	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,259	521	527	(6)	25

Comments on the above figures

Finance communicates with the department on a regular basis to manage and analyse spending, identifying potential savings that could support current and future priorities. In an era of constrained budgets, achieving these goals is essential. The above report forecasts that the department will be under budget by £0.025m at year-end.

Supporting Information

The department consists of 139fte, of which 69fte are externally funded, with a staff turnover savings target of £0.126m. The employee figures in this report incorporate the projected pay award for 24/25.

Through diligent account monitoring, the success of utilising grant and external funding to alleviate pressure on the core budget is evident in employee expenses. Specific projects have been identified, and staff time has been allocated accordingly. Ensuring at all times that we are compliance with the grant conditions. This approach will continue throughout the year.

To fulfil statutory and contractual obligations and support the borough's regeneration, maintaining a complete staff establishment is essential. However, the challenge of filling surveyor and project manager roles, even with a market supplement, has resulted in a lack of suitable candidates. Consequently, the engagement of agency personnel has been necessary, anticipated to cost £300,000 this financial year. Without these personnel, the borough's regeneration efforts would be hindered, potentially leading to a loss of business rates and council tax.

The recruitment of the agency staff has led to an increase in commercial rental income, as it has enabled the completion of pending rent reviews.

Managers have asked to identify and implement measures to reduce unnecessary spending, whilst also ensuring the needs of the service are met leading to the department's projecting a positive variance amounting to £0.040m within supplies and services.

A recent exercise was conducted to determine the costs associated with empty properties within the Borough. Consequently a new cost centre was established to monitor these expenses. In addition to the loss of rental income whilst the properties remain vacant, the Council incur additional costs for utilities, repairs, and maintenance. As of the end of July, the total costs related to these properties amount to £0.143m. To reduce the expenses actions need to be taken to accelerate the leasing or explore temporary uses for properties, such as short-term rentals or community projects, which will generate some income and reduce costs.

The Department highlighted the necessity of expert advice to advance regeneration projects. Additionally, the change in Government highlighted the need for an up-to-date Housing Strategy for the Borough. Following a meeting with the Director of Economy, Enterprise, and Property, it was decided to use the Department's reserves to cover these one-off costs. Seeking external advice will assist with future grant funding requests from the LCR and Government, and enable the department to fulfil its obligations regarding the borough's regeneration strategy.

Although the Council have seen a significant increase in energy costs over the last few years, it is anticipated that costs this financial year will be £0.163m lower than in 2023/24, representing a decrease of over 13%. The department is forecasting that it will be £0.062m under budget by year-end. Since contract prices are fixed until March 2025, projections are based on the 2023/24 usage using the unit price quoted by the supplier. However, if usage increases as more staff return to the office, these prices might rise.



The Repairs and Maintenance program is continually being reviewed to ensure it remains in budget. This financial year presents a challenge as no inflation adjustment was factored into the 2024/25 approved budget, and it was further reduced by 10%. It is projected that the expenditure will exceed the budget by £0.117m at the end of the year. This projection is based on the 2023/24 expenses and does not take into account the 6% inflation in general building materials over the past year, as reported by BCIS.

Additionally, the department has conducted an exercise to determine which expenditures are capital in nature, and these have now been reclassified within the capital program.

Similar to previous years, the school cleaning service's level agreement (SLA) is not meeting its financial targets due to the employment of agency for covering absences and leave, as well as the anticipated pay award. A reassessment of the SLA charges is in progress in preparation for the forthcoming budget year. Additionally, the demand for the service is declining as more schools transition to Academies.

Approved 2024/25 Savings




Please see for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EEP4	Cleaning Services – Council Buildings	580	Review cleaning arrangements, with a focus on only emptying bins and cleaning toilets daily.	100	0		A review of the cleaning service is underway with some positions removed from the structure. The full savings will not be achieved until the accommodation review is complete.
EEP2	Caretaking & Security Services	641	A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.	52	0		Following advice from HR the restructure will not take place until the final quarter of the year.
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property Department				152	0		





5.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
Green 	Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the annual target <u>is on course to be achieved</u>.</i>
Amber 	Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the annual target is on course to be achieved</i>
Red 	Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain</u> that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the target <u>will not be achieved unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken</u>.</i>

Direction of Travel Indicator

Green 	Indicates that performance is better as compared to the same period last year.
Amber 	Indicates that performance is the same as compared to the same period last year.
Red 	Indicates that performance is worse as compared to the same period last year.
N / A 	Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.